

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANTANA 00960 290452Z
ACTION EB-08

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EWWT, ETRD, MA
SUBJECT: CALLS BY AMERICAN SHIPPING LINES ON MADAGASCAR

1. SUMMARY. TWO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INDICATE THAT DIRECT
US FLAG SERVICE TO MADAGASCAR IS NOT A COMPLETE IMPOSSIBILITY.
END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY LEARNED RECENTLY THAT AFTER SEVERAL YEARS WITH
NO DIRECT SERVICE TO MADAGASCAR, A MOORE-MCCORMACK LINES
VESSEL CALLED AT MAJUNGA TO OFFLOAD SEVERAL PIECES OF HEAVY
CATERPILLAR EQUIPMENT. THIS CALL WAS SPECIALLY ARRANGED
BY THE LOCAL CATERPILLAR DEALER'S BROTHER AND CO-DIRECTOR
IN NEW YORK. THIS WAS PROBABLY QUITE A LUCRATIVE VENTURE
FOR MOORE-MACK BECAUSE ITS VESSEL HAD ONLY TO STOP BRIEFLY
AND UNLOAD THE EQUIPMENT INTO BARGES AND THEN SAIL AWAY.

3. COINCIDENTALLY, IN MID-MAY WE WERE VISITED BY REGIONAL
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF FARRELL LINES, RONALD N. SMITH, WHO
INFORMED THAT FARRELL HAD RENEWED INTEREST IN DIRECT
SERVICE TO MADAGASCAR, SINCE TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA
WAS DECLINING. HE WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE COFFEE
NOW BEING CARRIED BY IRAN EXPRESS LINES FROM TULEAR
WHERE IT IS CONSOLIDATED BY NORWEGIAN FLAG COASTERS OF
SCANDINAVIAN EAST AFRICAN LINES. WE POINTED OUT TO SMITH
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 ANTANA 00960 290452Z

THAT PL 480 TITLE II SHIPMENTS TO CATHOLIC RELIEF
SERVICES IN MADAGASCAR WILL BE AS MUCH AS 1,500 TONS
PER QUARTER OVER THE NEXT YEAR AND MAY OFFER A GOOD
INCENTIVE.

4. MAJOR PROBLEM WILL REMAIN THAT OF PORT DELAYS.
TAMATAVE, MADAGASCAR'S ONLY PORT WITH ALONGSIDE

BERTHING, CAN ONLY UNLOAD ABOUT 300 TONS A DAY PER SHIP, AND APPARENTLY CANNOT ACCOMMODATE MORE THAN THREE LARGE VESSELS AT A TIME. ADDITIONALLY, TAMATAVE LOCATED ON THE EAST COAST, REQUIRES A LENGTHY DIVERSION FROM THE MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL ROUTES MOST US FLAG CARRIERS USE. MAJUNGA & TULEAR, ON THE CHANNEL, ARE LIGHTERAGE PORTS, BUT APPARENTLY, AS IN THE CASE OF THE RECENT MOORE-MACK CALL, IN CERTAIN SPECIAL CASES, CALLS AT MAJUNGA CAN BE REMUNERATIVE.

5. COMMENT. FOR YEARS THIS EMBASSY HAS DECRIED THE LACK OF DIRECT US SHIPPING SERVICE AS ONE OF MANY REASONS FOR THE TEN-TO-ONE INBALANCE IN OUR TRADE. WE HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND THE HARD ECONOMIC REASONS WHICH DISCOURAGE US FLAG CARRIERS FROM SERVING MADAGASCAR, AND REALIZE THAT MOORE-MACK'S RECENT CALL AND RENEWED FARRELL INTEREST DO NOT IMPLY THAT EITHER LINE WILL REESTABLISH REGULAR SERVICE. HOWEVER, THESE EVENTS GIVE US SOME HOPE THAT ONE OR THE OTHER MAY RENEW LIMITED REGULAR SERVICE TO MADAGASCAR.

6. ACTION REQUESTED. I HAVE SUGGESTED TO THE CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES (CRS) REPRESENTATIVE IN MADAGASCAR THAT HE MAY WISH TO ASK HIS HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK TO INVESTIGATE POSSIBILITY OF CONTACTING FARRELL OR MOORE-MACK TO ASK THAT THEIR SHIPMENTS

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 ANTANA 00960 290452Z

BE CARRIED DIRECTLY TO MADAGASCAR. DEPARTMENT (EB/MA), IF IT PERCEIVES NO OBJECTION, PLEASE ALERT FARRELL AND MOORE-MACK TO POSSIBILITIES OFFERED BY CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES CARGOS. SMITH

NOTE BY OC/T: TELEGRAM DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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